

## Just another day in Hawkins by Ri2

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**Summary:** Because after a while, even the strangest of things can become routine.

## 1. Clarke's Day

I just recently finished watching Stranger Things with my dad. Almost immediately after, I got this ridiculous idea for a story, so I decided to put it down. Hope you enjoy!

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"And that, students, is how you could – – theoretically – – build a particle accelerator in your basement, in the unlikely event that you should ever need one for some reason," Scott Clarke, science teacher at Hawkins Middle School, concluded. Finishing his lecture, he stepped away from the insanely detailed diagram he had made on his blackboard while assiduously not looking at five particular students sitting next to each other in the middle of the room, taking notes with far more fervor than any of their fellow classmates. "And with that lesson concluded, I believe it's time for today's test. I hope you all studied!" A chorus of groans from his students told him all too well which of them had and which of them had not.

Two of the aforementioned five students, Mike Wheeler and El Byers, stiffened. "Oh no," Michael whispered. "We completely forgot!"

Their three friends, Dustin Henderson, Lucas Sinclair, and Will Byers (El's brother, by adoption), regarded the other two in disbelief. "Seriously?! How could you two forget?! You said you were going to have a study session at your house last night after our strategy meeting!" Lucas asked incredulously.

"And one without us, too," Will added, looking hurt.

El looked down at her desk, ashamed. "Sorry," she muttered.

"Hey, it's not her fault," Mike said quickly. "We totally were going to study, but... We, ah... Got distracted..."

Dustin regarded the two with a knowing look on his face. "You two spent the whole evening making out, didn't you?"

Mike and El turned bright red. "N-no, of course not! Don't be ridiculous!" Mike protested.

"Friends don't lie," El reprimanded Mike sharply.

Mike winced, then sighed and reluctantly said, "Okay, yeah, we were going to study, but... Well..."

"You decided to study each other," Lucas said, looking disgusted.

"Pretty much, yeah," Mike confessed, looking embarrassed.

"Was fun," El said shyly, shooting a quick smile at Mike, who smiled back.

"Mike, could you please not talk about kissing my sister? It makes me feel sick," Will complained. There was a pause. "No, wait, I think I actually am about to-" He coughed and suddenly spat up an eerie black slug.

Everyone stared at the slimy creature that didn't quite look like it belonged in this world with morbid fascination. "You know, you really should see a doctor about that," Mike commented.

"Mike, what doctor in the entire world could possibly help in this situation that wouldn't drag Will or El off to some shady government facility, never to be seen again?" Lucas pointed out.

"Fair enough," Mike conceded.

"Don't like doctors," El whimpered.

"Oh, by the way, Lucas? Pay up," Dustin told the boy next to him, extending a hand. Lucas grumbled and stuffed a crumpled five dollar bill in the outstretched palm.

"What's that about?" Will asked.

"Oh, I bet Lucas that Mike and El would be completely unprepared for the test because they spent all evening making out with each other. He was certain that wasn't going to happen. As you can see, I won," Dustin said smugly.

"I really need to stop making bets with you. I always lose," Lucas complained. "It's uncanny!"

Mike groaned and put his face in his hands. "Could you please stop making bets about what my girlfriend and I do in our free time? It's kind of embarrassing."

"Especially when said girlfriend is my sister," Will added.

"I'll stop making bets when Lucas stops being wrong about everything," Dustin said cheerfully.

"One of these days..." Lucas growled.

"All right, class," said Mr. Clarke, who had just finished putting the test sheets on his desk. "Come up and take your tests one at a time, please. And remember, this grade will count for a significant portion of your final."

Without warning, the windows shattered as heavily armed and armored soldiers smashed through them. The door was knocked off its hinges as more soldiers rushed in from the hallway outside, and the classroom suddenly grew very cramped with all the military enforcers jockeying for space between the desks and students, who looked more...irritated and resigned than afraid.

"FREEZE! NOBODY MOVE!" one of the soldiers shouted, brandishing his gun menacingly.

"Oh for...seriously?! This is the fifth time this month!" Mr. Clarke protested, looking far less afraid than most people who had several guns shoved in their faces would normally be.

"WE ARE HERE FOR SUBJECT ELEVEN! SURRENDER HER NOW, AND NOBODY NEEDS TO GET...*WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?! I SAID **NOBODY MOVE!***" the leader of the soldiers shouted at Lucas, who was in the process of handing a five-dollar bill to Dustin.

"Sorry sir, but my friend here owed me money. You see, I bet him that you guys would show up today, and he was positive that you wouldn't! Naturally, he was wrong," Dustin said cheerfully.

"How the hell did you know?! Seriously, how?!" Lucas demanded.

"You knew that we were coming?! *WHO TOLD YOU?!*" The (presumably) lead soldier demanded, sticking his gun in Dustin's face.

"Nobody, Sir, I just had a good feeling," Dustin said, not looking particularly bothered by the deadly weapon pointed at him.

"A feeling? Sir, maybe he's psychic too! We should take him in for questioning!" One of the other soldiers suggested, voice filled with awe.

"Excellent idea, soldier! Boy, you're coming with us!" The lead soldier barked.

Abruptly, Will spat up another slug. "Excuse me," he said apologetically.

"... And you're coming with us too!" The head soldier declared. "I have no idea what's up with you, but it's clearly not normal!"

"Sorry, but I don't think that's going to happen," Mike said, glaring at the soldier.

"Oh yeah? And what makes you say that, smart guy?!" The head soldier demanded, pointing his gun in Mike's face.

"Because the girl you're looking for is an incredibly powerful psychic who can murder people with her mind and is extremely protective of her boyfriend, whom you're pointing a gun at?" Dustin suggested cheerfully.

"And by extremely he means *scary* protective. They had to transfer Troy to a school in another *town* to keep El from breaking any more of his limbs or causing him to wet himself," Lucas added.

The lead soldier glanced at El, who was looking at him with an expression of pure hatred, blood oozing from her left nostril. "Mouth breathers," she snarled. "*Bad men!*"

"Oh, shit-" the lead soldier managed to get out before he and all the other soldiers collapsed, blood oozing from every orifice. Given that a

great number of them landed on top of desks or students, that blood got all over the place, and quite a number of El's classmates made their displeasure of this very clear.

"Come on, I just got this thing dry cleaned," one boy complained, looking down at his blood-spattered pants.

"I was going to wear this to my date tonight! Now it's ruined! *Ruined!*" A girl shrieked, gesturing dramatically at her blouse.

"Ack, one of them fell on me!" a boy yelled. "Geez, what do they feed these guys, he's really heavy!"

"You have no right to complain, *two* fell on me!" the kid next to him griped.

"Sorry," El apologized. She looked at Mike in concern. "You okay?"

"Yeah, I've gotten used to having guns pointed my face by now," Mike reassured her.

"We should probably be more concerned about how desensitized we've gotten to that, really," Will commented.

"What I'm more concerned about is that, despite sending like two dozen or more squads our way by now, not only are they not giving up, but they *STILL* haven't provided any of the troops with a way to protect against El's powers," Lucas grunted, shoving a dead soldier off of his lap.

"Well, that's the government for you," Mr. Clarke grouched, looking at the blood covering the floor in frustration. It'd just been waxed this morning. "Why bother admitting you've made a mistake when you can keep funneling millions and millions of taxpayer dollars into increasingly pointless and futile attempts to try and make it look like that mistake never happened?"

The first time this had happened, it was horrifying. The second time, disturbing. The third, somewhat alarming. After that, however, it had just gotten somewhat irritating. It was amazing, he thought, the sorts of things a person could get used to.

Sighing, he clapped his hands together. "Well, students, it looks like our test will have to be postponed until tomorrow." He tried to pretend he didn't hear the audible sigh of relief that filled the classroom. "However, as usual, anyone who is willing to help me clean up this mess and deal with the bodies will receive extra credit on their final grade."

"Sheriff Hopper will probably be happy to get more military hardware for the police armory," Mike said as he pushed a soldier off his desk. "It'll be useful if the government decides to give up on secrecy and flat-out invades the town. There's only so much El can manage, even if she is growing stronger every day."

"Sorry," El said apologetically.

"It's not your fault, El. We can't rely on you to do everything. We have to do our part too," Mike reassured her.

"And in the meantime, we're going to get more 'mystery meat' for lunch this week!" Dustin said eagerly.

"Not that it's much of a mystery, since pretty much the whole school knows by now it's human flesh," Will commented.

"Should we be concerned that by this point, we're more or less totally okay with being cannibals?" Lucas wondered.

"To be fair, it's probably still healthier than what they *used* to put in the lunchmeat," Mike pointed out. His friends had no choice but to agree with this.

"Would rather eat Eggos," El grunted.

Before anyone could get out of their seats to deal with the messy (and by this point, far too familiar) process of disposing of dead bodies, the lights started to flicker, the room shook, and a massive crack ran up one wall. "Oh come on! Again?!" Mr. Clarke snapped in frustration.

Dustin extended a hand. "Pay up."

"Dammit! How do you always know?!" Lucas yelled angrily, handing

over another five dollar bill.

"Maybe he really is psychic," Will suggested. "He usually does seem to be right about everything."

Dustin shrugged. "It's a gift."

With an eerie, whistling shriek, a pale, slender, faceless abomination started to pull itself out of the wall, the front of its head splitting open like a tooth-edged flower to reveal a deep gaping maw-

And an annoyed El pointed a hand at it and shouted, "NO."

The monster promptly disintegrated into specks of black dust. The lights flickered a few more times, then shone steadily again. The hole in the wall, and any trace the creature had ever been there, were gone.

"You okay?" Mike asked in concern, quickly handing El a tissue so she could wipe away the blood dripping from her nose.

She nodded, her face a bit pale and drawn but otherwise alright. "I'm fine. Gets easier every time."

"Which is a good thing, we don't want to have to spend another year with Lover-boy here pining for you and thinking you're dead," Lucas joked.

"I wasn't pining," Mike protested. Absolutely nobody believed him.

"Thank you for dealing with that, El," Mr. Clarke said, completely unfazed by the interdimensional horror that had tried to burst into their reality only to be immediately vanquished. "I don't suppose the next time, you can obliterate it a little less... Completely? If we could actually get an intact dead body from one of those things, I'm sure we can learn a lot more about them."

"I'll try," El promised.

"All right. Now, like I said, class, let's get these bodies out of here-" Mr. Clarke began when suddenly, the light started flickering again ". He frowned, actually surprised. "Another one? So soon? That's..."



The five friends in the middle of the room exchanged horrified looks. "Oh no," Will whispered. Dustin extended a hand to Lucas, who uttered a word he probably shouldn't have known before giving him another five dollar bill.

"Oh no? I don't like the sound of 'oh no.' What's happening?" Mr. Clarke asked sharply. If his ace students and budding young paranormal researchers and monster fighters reacted like that, that meant something REALLY that was about to happen.

"Mr. Clarke, you remember how we called you last night to ask, theoretically, how to build a particle accelerator in our basement?" Mike asked nervously.

"I do, yes," Mr. Clark said warily. It was hard to forget, especially since it had interrupted him in the middle of date night. Somehow, they always called on date night. It was uncanny.

"And no matter how many times we asked, you insisted that we would have to wait until today to learn about it?" Mike continued.

Mr. Clarke's heart sank as a deep sense of dread filled him. "Yes..."

Will swallowed, then coughed as he spat up another slug. "Well, um, we didn't *theoretically* need to build a particle accelerator in our basement, we *actually* needed to."

"... WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME THAT LAST NIGHT?!" Mr. Clarke demanded.

"Because you told us that you don't want your date nights ruined by knowledge of just what sort of horrible supernatural interdimensional abominations we're using your scientific knowledge to combat?" Dustin reminded the teacher.

"... Oh. Right. I did say that, didn't I?" Mr. Clarke recalled, his face drooping. He sighed. "I just wanted a bit of separation between the craziness my working life has become and my personal life. Some 'me time.' Was that so wrong?"

"Apparently, yes," Lucas pointed out. Mr. Clarke groaned.

"We know we put a lot of pressure on you Mr. Clarke, but... Honestly, you're the only person who can help us with the sort of thing. It's not like the library could tell us half the stuff we need to know, especially at the hours we tend to operate at," Mike said apologetically.

"You're the best," El said helpfully.

"Well, it's nice to hear that I'm appreciated, at least," Mr. Clarke said, chuckling in self-deprecation. "Still, it'd be a lot easier on all of us if there were just some sort of... I dunno, free, universal resource for information on all walks of life that could be consulted at anytime from anywhere to solve just about any solution. Like... Some kind of... I dunno, super encyclopedia?"

"Probably could use a better name than that," Will said.

"That does sound pretty useful," Mike admitted.

"Nah, there's no way something like that'll ever happen," Lucas said dismissively.

Dustin extended a hand. "Five bucks that it will come into being on January 15, 2001."

Lucas snorted. "Considering that the world will probably end way before then? You're on!" He shook Dustin's hand, demonstrating an astounding lack of pattern recognition.

"So, what exactly are we up against this-" Mr. Clarke began, only for the room to suddenly shake so hard that some of the other students yelped in alarm and reflexively hid under their desks like they vaguely remembered those earthquake preparedness or Soviet bomb drill films told them to do. The lights flashed, then abruptly shattered, sparks showering on the class briefly before the whole room went dark, eliciting more screams.

Outside, the sky turned red and abruptly split open, vomiting nightmares onto the town of Hawkins, most prominent of which was an absolutely colossal many-limbed horror that defied description which landed with an Earth-shaking thud, emitting a soul-rending mind-breaking roar as it ponderously began to move, its massive

appendages destroying buildings with every step, screams and explosions and monstrous howls echoing in the near distance.

Everyone in the classroom stared at the gargantuan monster in disbelief. A few crept right back under their desks, rationally knowing that there was no way hiding under their desk would possibly protect them from whatever that thing was, but figuring they'd rather hide under there than face it right now. "What in God's name is that thing?!" Mr. Clarke demanded finally.

"Yag-Thusogga, Defiler of Souls, Ravager of Civilizations, Devourer of Dimensions, and Destroyer of Worlds," Will recited. "Eighth of the 12 Lords of the plane we call the Upside-Down, come to 'flip' our realities so that its realm is 'right side up' and we fall into darkness and decay."

"Ah," Mr. Clark said vaguely. He glanced at the kids. "Can you stop it?"

El nodded and pointed the blackboard. Mr. Clarke's eyes lit up, understanding at once. "Okay, class, looks like we're canceling the planned test for today in favor of a more practical exam. Today we're going to see if we can build a working particle accelerator in the field. Succeed, and you will all receive passing grades. Fail, and we'll all probably die a horrible death. Fortunately, just about everything we need to build the device is right here in the school. So! Here's what we have to do..."

## 2. Hopper's Day

I thought this story was done, but then I got an idea for this. There might be more in the future, I'm not sure yet.

Also, can anyone spot the reference in this chapter?

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Deputy Powell of the Hawkins Police Department slowly poked his head into the station's break room. Much to his relief, there was nobody inside. After glancing over his shoulder a couple of times to make sure nobody else was coming down the corridor, he quietly entered the room and made a beeline for the refrigerator, licking his lips in anticipation.

Florence, the station's secretary clerk, had brought in homemade chocolate cake for everyone the other day to reward everyone in the department for pulling together to stop an incursion of spider-bats from Dimension Q, and there should still be some left in the fridge. It was Powell's intention to eat what remained of the cake before anyone else could have some, and then frame his fellow Deputy Callahan for the deed, as payback for Callahan eating his meatloaf the other day. True, this sounded rather petty, but a lawman's lunch was sacrosanct, and anyone who violated it must suffer a grievous fate. He was pretty sure it was written down somewhere.

Practically drooling at the thought of the sweet, sweet chocolate cake about to grace his taste buds, he opened the refrigerator door, light shining out to bathe his form...

And he paused. The light emanating from the fridge was not only more baleful than it usually was, but what lay within was most certainly not shelves full of lunch bags and containers containing the meals of the station officers. No, it was something far, far worse.

"CHIEF!" He shouted, not daring to take his eyes off what lay within the fridge.

"WHAT?" Came the reply from down the hall.

"THERE'S A HELLGATE IN THE FRIDGE!" Powell yelled.

There was a pause. "AGAIN?"

"YES, AGAIN!"

"DAMMIT. I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!"

A few moments later, Powell was joined by his superior, Chief Jim Hopper, the toughest lawman Hawkins had ever seen, whose trek into a dark other world to bring back a lost child and return unscathed had made him the stuff of legends, and he had only done more and more extraordinary feats since as the town slowly became stranger. He peered over his subordinate's shoulder, a frown on his rugged features as he regarded the unearthly sight before him.

The refrigerator now appear to be a portal opening up onto a dark realm with swirling clouds crackling with lightning, a pyramidal temple with a long staircase leading to a pair of transparent doors flanked by a pair of altars and numerous obelisks and hieroglyphics floating in the midst of a void, glowing eerily with supernatural power as demonic vaguely canine creatures crawled all over it. "Hmm," Hopper said after a moment.

"What'd I tell you? It's a hellgate, isn't it?" Powell said anxiously.

"Not necessarily," Hopper replied.

Powell stared at his chief in disbelief. "How is it not a hellgate?! It's a portal to some spooky-ass other dimension that doesn't seem to have any ground and is full of horrible monsters!"

"Yes, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's a portal to an EVIL 'spooky-ass other dimension that doesn't seem to have any ground and is full of horrible monsters,'" Hopper replied. "For all we know, those freakish abominations could be perfectly friendly. You shouldn't judge someone for their appearance, deputy."

Powell, who knew quite a bit about being judged by one's appearance thanks to his skin color, gave Hopper an incredulous look. "Chief, every single time we've run into some horrible-looking creature from another plane of existence, it has, in fact, turned out to be a horrible

monster instead of some friendly but ugly critter."

"Yes, but that doesn't mean that will ALWAYS be the case," Hopper said patiently. "Profiling is wrong, deputy. Until they act aggressively, I see no reason to engage in hostilities."

One of the vaguely canine horrors looked straight at them and growled, "ZUUUUUUUUUUUL."

Hopper's face hardened. "Ah. Well, that changes things."

Powell gave Hopper an exasperated look. "Oh, so we're not supposed to engage in hostilities until one of them snarls menacingly at us?! How do you know it isn't just saying, 'Hey neighbor, spare a cup of sugar?'"

"That's not just any snarl, Powell, nor is it a request for sugar. Zuul the Gatekeeper, along with its partner Vinz Clortho the Keymaster, are the two heralds of Gozer, an ancient ultra-powerful malignant entity from another dimension which was banished from our world 6000 years ago. If the two of them cross over, they'll possess people here in town and engage in a sacred mating ritual which will breach the dimensional barrier and allows Gozer to manifest fully in and destroy our world," Hopper explained.

Powell stared at Hopper blankly. "... Chief, how the HELL do you know all that?!"

"I date a librarian who has an incredibly extensive collection of occult texts," Hopper explained. "That, and apparently something like this happened in New York not too long ago, but some local specialists were able to repel Gozer and save the world. If you read the papers more, you'd probably have heard about it."

This did not surprise Powell in the slightest. Crazy shit happened in New York all the time, maybe even crazier than what was happening in Hawkins these days, and everyone knew that the locals were tough enough to take care of something as measly as an interdimensional God of destruction. "How did they do it?"

"With specialized equipment which, regrettably, we don't have access

to. Fortunately, given that Zuul is clearly still safely on the other side of the portal, that means neither it or its counterpart have crossed over to our realm to possess anyone to open the way for their master, so the situation isn't nearly as dire as it was in New York. At least, not yet. Therefore, we still have time to nip this problem in the bud," Hopper explained.

"Okay. What do we do?" Powell asked nervously, glancing into the portal. The canine demons seemed to be eyeing him hungrily.

"I'm going to go to the armory to pick up something that should take care of this. Don't close the fridge door while I'm gone, it might close the portal," Hopper ordered his deputy, turning for the exit.

"Close the...But isn't that what we WANT to happen?!" Powell asked incredulously.

"If we close the portal now, they'll just reopen it elsewhere and send either Zuul or Vinz Clortho through," Hopper explained. "But so long as it's open here, we can access their realm just as much as they can access ours... Which is something I think they will soon regret."

Powell grimaced. "Well, okay... But if any of them make a move for me, I'm slamming this door right in their faces!"

"Duly noted," Hopper said, leaving the break room and bustling down the corridor towards the armory.

A few years ago, the department armory had been very sparse, with barely enough guns to keep every officer on the force armed. Ever since things had turned upside down, however (in more ways than one), the formerly unassuming room was now full of shelves upon shelves of heavy-duty weapons confiscated from the numerous military forces that had been dispatched by shady government officials to try and reclaim El or otherwise try and clean up the many and varied messes their meddling with forces beyond their ken had created in the first place. Since none of those agents were in any condition to reclaim their property, the Hawkins Police Department saw nothing wrong in taking their gear and using it for a far better purpose. There was also some rather more... *Exotic* equipment obtained from visitors to Hawkins that weren't quite from around

there, but nobody was entirely sure how it worked, so it was all stored in a relatively safe corner of the armory until a decision could be made as to what to do with it.

As always, Officer Torres Owens was standing behind the cage mesh separating the armory shelves from the outside world. Owens had been in charge of the armory for several years now, and while one might find it odd that a man who repeatedly and vehemently protested against the use of guns ever since his daughter was accidentally killed by one was in charge of the department's weaponry, there was no better man in Hawkins who understood how important it was to be responsible with firearms than he. "Morning, chief," Owens said cheerfully as Hopper entered the room. "What can I do for you?"

"I'm gonna need a rocket launcher, Owens," Hopper informed the man. "We've got a Hellgate in the fridge."

"Again?!" Owens asked in disbelief. "But this is the fourth time this month!"

Hopper shrugged. "Hey, I'm not the one who keeps opening them."

Owens sighed. "Yeah, yeah... Well, you know the drill. Here's the paperwork," he said, sliding a clipboard full of several sheets of paper through a slot in the mesh to Hopper. "Can't give you anything until you fill it all out, same as usual."

Hopper shook his head in bemusement as he started filling out the various requisition forms to gain access to the rocket launcher, something he was more used to by now than he probably should have been. "Crime dramas never show people just how much paperwork is involved in doing our jobs."

"Would be a much less exciting show to watch, I imagine. Would get terrible ratings," Owens commented as Hopper returned the paperwork to him. "Huh, you finished that fast. You're getting way too used to this."

"Unfortunately," Hopper grunted as Owens wandered into the shelves and returned shortly thereafter with a sizable hand-held rocket



launcher.

"Here you go, chief," Owens said, sliding the rather large weapon through a recently-added slot big enough to accommodate it. "This should do the trick. Hopefully. "

"Thanks, Owens," Hopper grunted, staggering a little as he lifted the very, very heavy weapon into the air. "It loaded?"

"Naturally. Safety's on, of course. Wouldn't want it to go off in the station," Owens informed his superior.

"In that case, with any luck, our fridge will be our own again in short order," Hopper said, patting the side of the rocket launcher.

"You have any idea why hellgates keep opening in the refrigerator, anyway?" Owens asked.

"I can't be certain, but I suspect it's a combination of resonance from the still-open portal to the Upside-Down beneath the Department of Energy research facility, the station being built atop a convergence of Ley lines as well as two graveyards-one Native American, the other not-and the fact that the architect who built this place was an insane cultist who deliberately constructed the station in such a way as to harness supernatural energy to tear open gateways to other realms and unleash unspeakable horrors upon our unprepared world," Hopper theorized.

"Huh. Is that why I keep finding indecipherable messages written in blood on the bathroom mirrors and the coffee machine can make nothing but decaf?" Owens asked.

"No, that's just the ghost inhabiting one of the toilets playing pranks on you and a witch's curse," Hopper replied.

Owens blinked. "A witch cursed our coffee machine?"

"She was very angry when Callahan wrongfully arrested her for allegedly putting a hex on someone's dog and it just turned out to have worms," Hopper explained. "She could have done worse, but she realized that a police station without caffeine is one constantly on the brink of collapse and decided that would be nasty enough."

"What a wicked woman," Owens murmured, shaking his head in dismay. "Well, good hunting, chief. Those bastards won't know what hit 'em."

Hopper made the return trip to the break room, moving slower and more carefully due to carrying a rather heavy and very dangerous weapon. When he finally reentered the room, he found an increasingly twitchy Powell still guarding the room, looking only seconds away from drawing his firearm and filling the refrigerator with lead. "Chief! About time you got back here!" Powell exclaimed in naked relief. "From the way these mutts have been eyeing me, I'm pretty sure it wouldn't be much longer before they tried to eat me!"

"Don't be silly, Powell, they aren't going to eat you," Hopper chided his subordinate. "After all, if they ate you, then none of them can possess you to open a gateway for their master."

Powell shot Hopper an annoyed look. "Gee, thanks," he said sarcastically. He frowned. "Hey, wait a minute, why do they even need to open a gateway when they've got a portal right here? Can't Gozer just pop right through?"

"Gozer is a godlike being. A standard issue refrigerator portal isn't going to be big enough to let it through to our reality, its minions have to come through first to prepare the way for their master," Hopper explained. "That's why, even though the dimensional barriers are growing thinner and thinner around our town, the *really* nasty stuff can't just cross over whenever they please."

"Thank goodness for that," Powell muttered.

"Yeah, but there's no telling how much longer that'll last. Like I said, the barriers are growing weaker. Unless we can find a way to close up all those cracks in reality for good..." Hopper shrugged in resignation. "Well, that's a problem for another day. This, I think, is something that can be resolved more easily through judicious use of high-yield explosives."

"Amen to that," Powell said, moving out of the way as Hopper approached the fridge, got down on one knee, and aimed the rocket launcher through the portal, making sure the crosshairs were pointed

right at the ominous temple on the other side. The demonic hounds, noticing what the chief was doing, paused, looking concerned, as well they should.

"Chew on this, you ugly bastards," Hopper snarled, removing the safety and squeezing the trigger.

With a tremendous roar, a rocket streaked out of the launcher tube and sailed through the void towards the temple. Hopper, having been knocked back and his shoulder nearly dislocated from the recoil, shouted at Powell, "Close it! Now!"

Powell quickly slammed the refrigerator door shut just before the rocket could hit the temple. There was the sound of a muffled explosion, and the refrigerator shuddered, the lights flickering for a moment. The two officers stared at the refrigerator for a few minutes once it settled back down, waiting to see if that was it. "Think it worked?" Powell asked finally.

"Only one way to find out," Hopper grunted, putting the rocket launcher on the ground (after making sure to reset the safety first) and standing up, rubbing his shoulder with a wince.

Cautiously, they approached the refrigerator, which was silent and still, like most refrigerators should be. Hopper nodded at Powell, who very reluctantly pulled open the door...

And the duo stared in horror at what awaited them inside, the sight infinitely worse than the dark realm they had just witnessed. "Those sons of bitches," Powell swore, furious. "They stole all of the food!"

Hopper shook his head solemnly at the spotless and completely empty shelves filling the interior of the fridge. "Truly the scum of the multiverse."

"Now we're going to have to get takeout for lunch! Like *savages*!" Powell yelled angrily.

Hopper patted the deputy's shoulder sympathetically. "Well, Powell, I think having to suffer through takeout is an acceptable loss for saving the world from destruction by an evil extradimensional entity."

"Just barely," Powell grumbled, slamming the refrigerator door shut with a solemn look on his face.

"By the way, that reminds me: what exactly were you doing in here anyway? It's nowhere near lunchtime," Hopper said, giving Powell a suspicious look.

Powell froze. "Well, uh, the thing is..." He began nervously.

...

Elsewhere...

"Really? Really?!" Gozer the Gozerian, the Destructor, the Traveler, Volguus Zildrohar and Lord of the Sebouillia uttered in frustration, looking at the smoldering heap of ruins which was all that remained of its temple, its loyal Terror Dogs moaning and whimpering as they struggled to pull themselves out of the rubble. "I *just* finished fixing everything after that embarrassing debacle in New York!" The deity sighed in exasperation. "Honestly, maybe I should just give up Earth as a lost cause. The humans have gotten *much* stronger than I would've expected while I've been away. Surely there are other worlds that would be easier to conquer..."

The extradimensional being paused, then stuffed another forkful of Florence's chocolate cake into one of its mouths. "Still, at least the food is nice..."